



FEMA

Recovery News

Jan. 16, 2008

LA 1603-07-08-760

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FEMA ANNOUNCES LIMITED EXCEPTION FOR WORK IN PROGRESS

NEW ORLEANS — Property owners who have already begun or completed mitigation work such as elevation, reconstruction or retrofitting to their structures damaged by hurricanes Katrina or Rita may be eligible for hazard mitigation funding under a new limited exception from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP).

Typically hazard mitigation projects started or completed prior to FEMA approval are not eligible for funding under HMGP regulations. However, the unique circumstances of the 2005 disasters prompted FEMA to request a waiver from the White House's Office of Management and Budget.

"FEMA believes that property owners who took it upon themselves to build back stronger, smarter and safer at their own expense should not be deemed ineligible just because they moved forward quickly," said Acting Associate Deputy Administrator for Gulf Coast Recovery Jim Stark.

Residential, commercial, public and private non-profit structures damaged by either hurricane Katrina or Rita may be eligible for the retroactive funding, provided that they meet all other HMGP requirements. This exemption applies to property owners who have completed or started mitigation work on their property by **March 16, 2008** and whose properties fall into one of the following categories:

- Properties identified as eligible for elevation through the state's Road Home program, which will be included in the Office of Community Development's (OCD) HMGP application; or
- Properties included in an HMGP application proposed by a parish and submitted to the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP).

Those residential, commercial and non-historic public and nonprofit facilities that have not started or completed mitigation work by March 16, 2008 may still remain eligible for HMGP funding. Property owners who have not started or completed mitigation work prior to March 16, 2008 will have to wait for FEMA review and approval prior to initiating work. All properties, including those as part of this limited exception, must meet all other HMGP requirements. Documentation is required to verify eligibility.

This initiative is the result of a substantive ongoing, cooperative effort on the part of FEMA, GOHSEP, OCD and the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) to develop a mechanism to deliver mitigation funding to eligible property owners.

"By recognizing the unique circumstances created by hurricanes Katrina and Rita and granting this exception, FEMA has stepped up to increase the flexibility of this program at a critical time in our recovery. I applaud them for that," said LRA Executive Director Paul Rainwater. "With these new guidelines in place, the ball is now

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squarely in our court, and I look forward to working with GOHSEP and OCD to develop a plan of action for executing this program quickly.”

Homeowners participating in the Road Home program will be contacted by OCD with information about how to proceed with accessing mitigation funds. Parishes with HMGP projects that include properties eligible for this exemption will contact the property owners with information about how to proceed.

Funding availability for those properties that have a historic component is contingent upon who owns the property. Historic properties owned by public agencies and private nonprofit organizations are not eligible if the project was not initiated or completed prior to the January 16, 2008 announcement of the exception. Properties owned by private individuals may still be eligible for HMGP grant consideration under the exception if a project is initiated or completed by March 16, 2008. Due to the large number of historic properties and historic districts throughout Louisiana, FEMA will assist local and national preservation organizations in providing information to the public on how they can use this funding while protecting the historic character of their historic properties.

HMGP provides grants to state and local governments to implement long-term hazard mitigation measures after a major disaster declaration, to reduce the loss of life and property due to natural disasters and to enable mitigation measures to be implemented during the immediate recovery from a disaster.

FEMA coordinates the federal government’s role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror.

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Editors: For more information on Louisiana disaster recovery, visit www.fema.gov/gcro.